

~~WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:~~

~~1.~~ A system for controlling product items with shelf-life  
5 limitations comprising:

means for determining shelf-life limitation information for  
each of one or more product items;

means for recording said shelf-life limitation information  
for each of said one or more product items;

10 means for reading said recorded shelf-life limitation  
information for each of said one or more product items;

means for electronically recording said shelf-life  
limitation information for each of said one or more product items  
in an electronically readable and storable form.

15 ~~2.~~ The system of claim 1, further comprising:

means for communicating said electronically recorded shelf-  
life limitation information for each of said one or more product  
items to a microprocessor.

20 ~~3.~~ The system of claim 2, further comprising:

means for storing said communicated electronic shelf-life  
limitation information for each of said one or more product items  
in a memory accessible by said microprocessor.

25 4. The system of claim 3, further comprising:

means for formatting for an on-screen display said stored  
electronic shelf-life limitation information for each of said one  
or more product items.

30 5. The system of claim 4, further comprising:

means for displaying as an on-screen display said formatted  
electronic shelf-life limitation information for each of said one  
or more product items.

6. The system of claim 5, further comprising:  
means for a purchaser to interact with said on-screen  
5 display of said formatted electronic shelf-life limitation  
information for each of said one or more product items to  
identify new product items.

7. The system of claim 6, further comprising:  
10 means for said purchaser to interact with said on-screen  
display of said formatted electronic shelf-life limitation  
information for each of said one or more product items to  
identify deleted product items.  
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contd*

15 8. The system of claim 7, further comprising:  
means for said purchaser to interact with said on-screen  
display of said formatted electronic shelf-life limitation  
information for each of said one or more product items to  
identify opened product items.

20 9. The system of claim 5 where the means for reading said  
recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one  
or more product items further comprises;

25 means for converting said read shelf-life limitation  
information for each of said one or more product items to an  
electronically readable and storable form.

10. An apparatus for controlling product items with shelf-  
life limitations comprising:  
30 a display monitor,  
electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information  
for each of said one or more product items;  
a mechanism capable of reading said electronically recorded  
shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more  
35 product items;

a memory;

5 a microprocessor programmed to receive said electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more product items;

said microprocessor further programmed to store in said memory said electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more product items.

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11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein:

15 said microprocessor is further programmed to format for display on said display monitor said electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more product items.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein:

20 said microprocessor is further programmed to generate signals for display on said display monitor said electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more product items.

25 13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein said display monitor displays said generated signals of said electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more product items.

30 14. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein said mechanism capable of reading said electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for each of said one or more product items comprises:

a bar code scanner;

a bar code scanner interface with said microprocessor.

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15. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein said mechanism  
capable of reading said electronically recorded shelf-life  
5 limitation information for each of said one or more product items  
comprises:

a Radio Frequency Identification reader;

a Radio Frequency Identification interface with said  
microprocessor.

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16. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising:

a mechanism capable of receiving input from a purchaser.

17. The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said purchaser input  
15 receiving capable mechanism is a touch-sensitive panel on said  
display monitor.

18. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said generated  
signals for display on said display monitor of said  
20 electronically recorded shelf-life limitation information for  
each of said one or more product items are sorted such that items  
that are nearly expired are highlighted.

19. A method of managing consumption of expiration-dated  
25 products comprising the steps of:

capturing expiration dating information relating to a  
perishable item into a database;

identifying a perishable item being purchased in accord  
with electronically readable indicia;

30 matching said perishable item to corresponding  
expiration dating information in accord with said indicia;

creating an electronic receipt including said  
expiration dating information;

35 transferring said electronic receipt to a remote  
terminal apparatus; and

subsequently displaying expiration dating information so as to allow perishable items to be timely consumed.

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20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the electronically readable indicia comprises at least an item identification code.

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21. The method according to claim 20, wherein the item identification code is one of a group consisting of a universal product code (UPC), a stock keeping unit (SKU) code and a price-look-up (PLU) code.

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22. The method according to claim 21, wherein the electronically readable indicia is one of a group consisting of an RFID label and a bar code.

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23. The method according to claim 22, wherein the remote terminal apparatus is a ~~home~~ terminal and wherein the home terminal is disposed in proximity to a perishable item storage facility.

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24. The method according to claim 23, wherein the transferring step further comprises:

writing the electronic receipt, including said expiration dating information, into a memory storage area of a smart card; and

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reading the electronic receipt, including said expiration dating information, into the home terminal.

25. The method according to claim 23, wherein the transferring step further comprises:

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writing the electronic receipt, including said expiration dating information, into a memory storage area of a  
5 web server; and

reading the electronic receipt, including said expiration dating information, into the home terminal by accessing said web server.

10 26. The method according to claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

identifying each perishable item to be added to the storage facility to the home terminal;

15 associating each item to corresponding expiration dating information; and

appending each item so identified to an inventory control list, the list including expiration dating information associated with each perishable item appended to the list.

20 27. The method according to claim 26, further comprising the step of deleting a perishable item from the list at such time as the item is removed from the storage facility.

25 28. The method according to claim 27, wherein perishable item identification and removal is accomplished without human intervention by automatic and periodic interrogation of the contents of the storage facility by an RFID reader.

30 29. The method according to claim 27, wherein the electronically readable indicia includes expiration dating information in combination with an item identification code.

35 30. The method according to claim 29, wherein the electronically readable indicia further includes item description information.

31. The method according to claim 27, wherein the electronic receipt includes expiration dating information  
5 associated with an item's corresponding identification code.

32. The method according to claim 31, wherein the electronic receipt further includes item description information associated with an item's corresponding identification code.

10 33. The method according to claim 32, further comprising the steps of:

15 consulting the electronic receipt to access expiration dating and item description information for each corresponding item added to perishable storage;

constructing the inventory control list such that each item is identified by its description information; and

ordering the list such that expiration dating information is associated to each item.

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